

SUPPORTING THE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF EFFECTIVE HUMANITARIAN ENERGY POLICIES, STRATEGIES AND PLANS

About SUN-ESDS

Energy Solutions for Displacement Settings (SUN-SUN-ESDS) is a component of the Global Programme with UNHCR (SUN), which is commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The Global Programme supports UNHCR in facilitating the operationalisation of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP)

Nexus. Its core mission is to address pressing energy challenges faced by populations affected by displacement. By focusing on the integration and deployment of reliable, clean, and sustainable energy solutions, SUN-ESDS aims to enhance the quality of life, well-being, and environmental conditions of affected communities. The project is instrumental in supporting the wider humanitarian, development and peace community in meeting the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).

Relevance of Energy Policies, Strategies and Plans in Displacement Settings

The Agenda 2030's **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #7.1** aims to enable universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services by 2030 and aligns closely with the GCR's focus on improving living conditions for refugees, promoting their inclusion and expanding capacity-building efforts to advance smart, affordable and suitable technologies, especially renewable energy solutions. Indeed, solving humanitarian energy challenges is an essential piece of the puzzle to ensure that no one is left behind, but it is also a highly complex task due to the remote, isolated and frequently off-grid locations of camps and settlements. Additionally, these challenges are intensified by the competing priorities of resource constrained humanitarian organisations and the economic constraints of displaced populations. 90% of refugees worldwide have limited access to affordable and clean energy solutions. They are excluded from the benefits of modern energy or resort to negative coping strategies, such as dependence on biomass for cooking, which impacts the local environment.

Achieving the goal of universal access to energy is not just a fundamental need, but a catalyst for much needed economic development in protracted displacement settings, making investments in energy solutions a critical priority, as envisaged by the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) of the GCR. Support to the development of adequate energy policies, strategies and plans in refugee-hosting countries is a key enabler for meeting the overall needs of displaced populations. Policies set the overarching goals, provide the framework and guiding principles that can influence "what" should be done to address the pressing issue of energy in displacement settings, while strategies aim to articulate the approach and direction for "how" the goals will be achieved. Plans are needed to transform strategy into detailed action by focusing on the "who", "where", "when", and by addressing aspects of resources and responsibilities. Policy support was a key intervention area for the SUN-ESDS.

Description of the Intervention

The SUN-ESDS project has taken a unique and innovative approach in enhancing humanitarian energy policy support. Its efforts include providing strategic advisory services to governmental partners, effectively engaging with communities, and integrating a wide range of stakeholders to promote refugee-inclusive planning for sustainable energy access.

In Ethiopia, ESDS has been instrumental in crafting pivotal strategies, including the national Electrification Strategy for Refugees and Host Communities (2024–2030) and the Multi Actor Cooking Energy Strategy (2022–2030).

In Uganda, the project has supported the creation of the Government of Uganda's Sustainable Energy Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities (SERP) for the period 2022–2025 endorsed by Uganda's CRRF Steering Group in December 2021.

In Kenya, ESDS has concentrated on fortifying local energy governance through the development of draft documents like the Turkana County Energy Sector Plan (2020–2025) and the Turkana County Energy Policy (2022) in alignment with the Kenya Energy Act of 2019. These have culminated in the formulation of the Turkana County Energy Bill (2024), pivotal in advancing Kenya's decentralized governance structure.

These initiatives highlight the ESDS project's commitment to innovative policy frameworks, capacity development, and collaborative efforts to ensure sustainable energy solutions in displacement settings.

Locations:	Ethiopia (national) Uganda (national) Kenya (Turkana County)
Target group:	Refugees and host communities, Government Entities, Private Sector, Development Partners and NGOs
Timeframe:	2019 – 2024



Official launch event of SERP in Uganda. Photo Credit: Malaika/GIZ

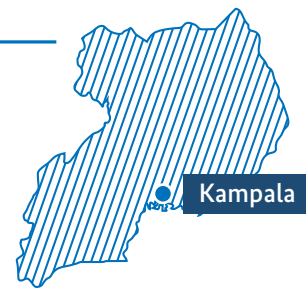
Methodology of the Intervention

The ESDS project has tailored its policy support activities across different countries:

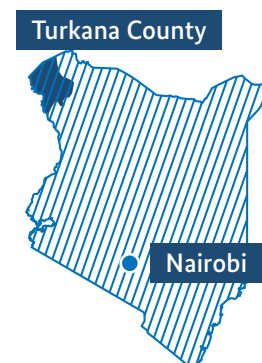
In **Ethiopia**, the development of the Multi-Actor Cooking Energy Strategy was significantly strengthened by prior research and stakeholder coalition-building efforts supported by UNHCR. The strategy, along with the comprehensive Electrification Strategy, was crafted with the active participation of key organizations, including UNHCR and the Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS), which formed part of the core technical team. The Energy and Environment Working Group, led by the Ministry of Water and Energy, played a critical role in policy review and approval.



In **Uganda**, the creation of the Sustainable Energy Response Plan (SERP) was a notably co-creational and consultative process led by Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD). It built on previous efforts of GIZ's EnDev programme and UNHCR and was nested in existing sector response plans as part of the Government of Uganda's commitment to the GCR under the leadership of OPM and the CRRF Secretariat.



In **Kenya**, the process of drafting the Turkana County Energy Sector Plan commenced with a thorough situational analysis of the local energy sector, conducted in close partnership with the Turkana County Government. This built upon earlier collaborative initiatives between the UNHCR and the Government of Kenya, such as Phase One (2018-2022) of the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan in Turkana West (KISEDPP) as well as previous work done by GIZ via the ProSolar and EnDev projects. This strategic groundwork facilitated alignment with provisions like those in the Kenya Refugee Act of 2021, and triggered development of the Turkana County Energy Policy and Turkana County Energy Bill.



Across all countries, SUN-ESDS emphasized stakeholder engagement, evidence-based planning, and the integration of refugee and host community energy needs into county and national policies.

Achievements and Initial Impacts

The SUN-ESDS's policy interventions have successfully facilitated multi-stakeholder policy formulation and development across multiple countries, creating frameworks for sustainable energy solutions in displacement settings.



Electrification
Strategy

In **Ethiopia**, SUN-ESDS-supported the newly endorsed Electrification Strategy, approved in May 2024, aligning energy access with national environmental goals, and promoting private sector engagement and market growth. Partners like the World Bank have pledged support for this strategy.

In **Uganda**, SUN-ESDS support led to the official approval and launch of the SERP as a national initiative in August 2022. SERP represents a comprehensive approach that addresses the energy needs of refugees and host communities, enhances local economic opportunities, and reduces environmental pressures in these areas.

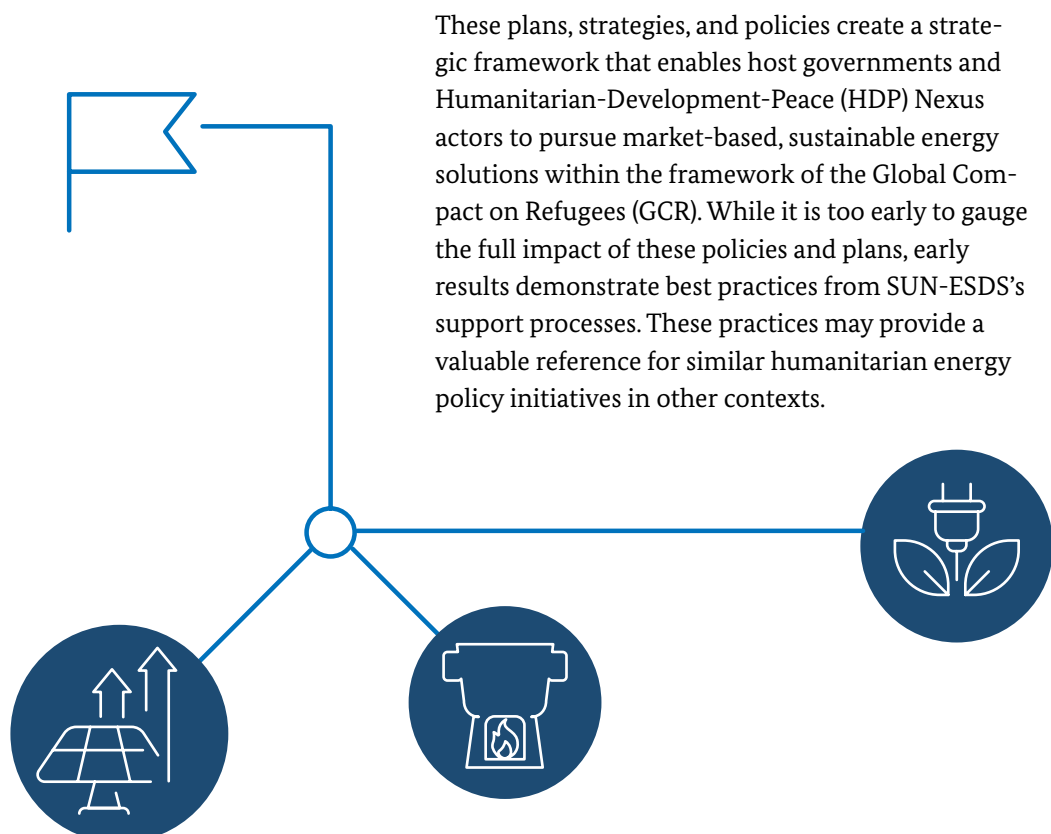


SERP addresses the energy needs of
refugees and host communities



Sectoral support led
to the drafting of the
Turkana County
Energy Bill

In **Kenya**, SUN-ESDS's sectoral support spurred a formal stakeholder consultation process in 2024, drawing significant political attention to inclusive energy solutions. This process led to the drafting of the Turkana County Energy Bill—the first sub-national legislative initiative in Kenya to incorporate the energy needs of refugees.



Best Practices and Sustainability Aspects

The energy policy activities implemented by SUN-ESDS in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda have yielded valuable best practices, underscoring the importance of strategic alignment with existing policies, fostering inclusivity, partnering with local and national entities, and leveraging market-based approaches to drive sustainable energy solutions in displacement settings.

Strategic Integration with Existing Policies:

In all three countries, SUN-ESDS grounded its support in existing frameworks, building on prior efforts and aligning with both national and global policies. This approach facilitated positive government collaboration and acceptance. In Kenya, ensuring the alignment between CRRF and the KISED P was crucial to address existing policy limitations and ensure coherence.



ESDS Kenya partners during an annual joint activities planning workshop
Photo Credit: GIZ / ESDS Kenya



SERP consultation. Photo Credit: Paul Quigly, Consultant Integration

Inclusive, Whole-of-Society Approach:

Uganda's SERP emphasized inclusivity by shifting from a whole-of-government to a whole-of-society approach. By building on District Development Plans that already linked refugee and energy issues, SUN-ESDS aligned its efforts with Uganda's National Development Plan III, reinforcing local development priorities.



Energy and Environment Working Group (EEWG)
Photo Credit: GIZ/ ESDS Ethiopia

Multi-Stakeholder Approaches Across Countries:

In Ethiopia, multi-stakeholder processes were co-chaired by the government and UNHCR, also engaging actors like SNV to strengthen market-based solutions through various working groups. Similarly, in Uganda, multi-actor review processes included civil society organisations to broaden input. In Kenya, multi-agency technical steering committees were established for Turkana County Energy Policy and Turkana County Energy Bill development process, ensuring wide-ranging input in policy design.

Market-Driven Strategies for Sustainable

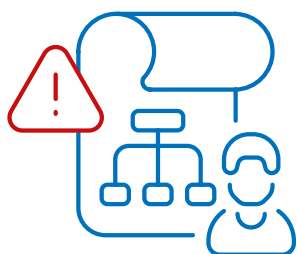
Outcomes: SUN-ESDS's activities emphasized the importance of integrating market-based approaches to enhance sustainable and inclusive programming. In Kenya, activities demonstrated how connecting private sector efforts with policy initiatives, through feasibility studies and enabling their participation in consultation processes, can address energy needs while transparent policy trajectories facilitate clear business cases for private sector players. Expanding high-tier electricity access to both refugee and host community households requires significant infrastructure development and financial investment, for which the private sector is a key ally.

This reflective approach allows for continual improvement in humanitarian energy policy and programming.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

The effectiveness and impact of SUN-ESDS's support processes in the three countries is assumed to be strongly influenced by prior sectoral developments, sectoral capacities, resource commitments, as well as the unique socio-cultural, political, and environmental landscapes and priorities of each nation. Contrasting experiences in the three countries to derive lessons learnt can be highly valuable in offering insights for examining the conditions and factors that affect the success and challenges of policy support processes.

Drawing on project documents, interviews, and stakeholder discussions, the following challenges and lessons, complementary to the best practices identified above, offer critical insights for guiding the design of future policy development and implementation support processes. Although these lessons are primarily drawn from the challenges encountered in Uganda, they provide stakeholders with valuable ideas on how to enhance engagement, secure funding, and gain commitment from a diverse range of actors to advance the realisation of sustainable energy solutions in displacement settings.



Inadequate Coordination and Commitment:

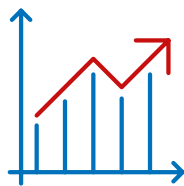
Following approval of the SERP in Uganda, insufficient attention and support was received from government agencies and development partners to support the SERP implementation. While SUN-ESDS made effort to determine the resourcing requirements for the intended SERP secretariat, including the development of job profiles, there was a perceived lack of commitment from government agencies to push the implementation forward due to limited resources and funding. The SERP development also appears not to have been adequately linked to broader rural energy planning processes underway in Uganda. SERPs delayed operationalization is also attributed to the lack of counterpart funding secured by the Government of Uganda which itself committed to the CRRF / GCR prior to commencement of the SERP development process.



Smooth and Supported Transition: The premature approval of the SERP in Uganda without corresponding financial commitment led to disbandment of the SERP steering committee which was an important multi-stakeholder vehicle during the development process. Establishing the SERP Secretariat immediately after the SERP approval could have catalysed greater support and momentum. Its absence hindered funding opportunities and implementation support, as various development partners, including GIZ and UNHCR, struggled to push the agenda forward.



Insufficient Private Sector Involvement: while private sector was included in consultative policy development processes, as much as civil society representatives, they were not sufficiently integrated into co-steering processes. This is considered to represent a missed opportunity to diversify funding and support lines.



Need for Further Capacity Development:

The centralistic nature of MEMD is considered to have affected the efficiency of project implementation. It was observed that MEMD staff involved in driving policy processes based in Kampala generally need more exposure to district level and/or in displacement settings. SUN-ESDS therefore supported relevant staff to gain exposure to the ground realities in displacement settings. This contrasts with more decentralized ministries like Water and Health who are involved in other sectoral responses as part of CRRF.

In Kenya, SUN-ESDS partnered with Turkana County Government to conduct a capacity needs assessment, which informed the development of a tailored capacity development strategy. For instance, policymakers received training in effective policymaking and communication skills, addressing key areas identified during the assessment.



Insufficient Secured Funding:

The implementation of the SERP (Sustainable Energy Response Plan) faced significant delays due to funding challenges. Although the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD) was designated as the lead institution, progress stalled as financing for the SERP secretariat relied on anticipated support from the World Bank. The misalignment between the timing of this support and implementation needs resulted in approximately two years of lost momentum.

This issue highlights a broader challenge that extends beyond Uganda—energy solutions often hinge on securing adequate resources and investments to ensure the full execution of plans and strategies. A similar scenario has been observed in Kenya, where insufficient funding has slowed energy project implementation.

In Turkana County, for example, it is crucial to raise awareness among policymakers, especially members of the County Assembly, about the provisions of new energy policies. Doing so can facilitate the allocation of appropriate funding, including from public sources, to drive energy project success and sustainability.

Recommendations

Based on experiences in implementing policy development processes through SUN-ESDS, several important areas have been highlighted for improvement, such as the need for better coordination, governmental assurances, and strategic partnerships. Nonetheless, SUN-ESDS laid an important groundwork for addressing energy challenges in displacement settings. The learning points from these initial stages could be leveraged to improve future project implementations and coordination efforts e.g. through the following recommendations:

Secure Early Funding Commitments:

Establish robust financial commitments early in the planning phase to avoid delays in policy implementation – this could be achieved through memorandum of understanding or other formal agreements between key stakeholders, such as government, development partners and private companies. As shown by Uganda's SERP experience, delays in securing funding can hinder momentum and stakeholder engagement. Early coordination with HDP partners to establish funding commitments and resource planning can mitigate these risks.

Ensure Continuous Coordination and Feedback Mechanisms: Retain multi-stakeholder steering groups and coordination platforms even after initial approvals. Maintaining active oversight and feedback mechanisms supports seamless transitions between planning and implementation, helping sustain long-term momentum and adaptability of initiatives.

Leverage Existing Policy Frameworks: Build on established legal and national frameworks to align new initiatives with ongoing local and international agendas. In Kenya, alignment with previous government and private sector efforts provided a solid foundation for ongoing energy solutions, demonstrating that grounding projects in pre-existing frameworks can improve sustainability and governmental support.

Address Human Resource Constraints:

Develop human resources and improve access to skilled personnel in both policy formulation and on-the-ground coordination. Staffing challenges, as noted in Uganda, suggest a need for targeted capacity-building, especially for ministry staff unfamiliar with displacement settings, to enhance regional representation and effective policy execution.

Strengthen Stakeholder Involvement:

Proactively involve a diverse range of stakeholders, including private sector entities and NGOs, in both policy development and implementation phases. Enhanced participation from these groups can improve funding diversity, operational efficiency, and broaden the ownership of solutions.

Advance Market-Based Solutions:

Facilitate and spotlight the efficacy of market-driven approaches to attract support. Fostering partnerships with the private sector and developing clear business cases can help ensure that energy solutions are both scalable and financially sustainable, addressing funding limitations in refugee settings.



Conclusion

In conclusion, the policy interventions supported by SUN-ESDS in Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia have laid a **solid foundation for integrating sustainable energy solutions into displacement settings**. While the initial results demonstrate significant policy development achievements, such as the launch of the SERP in Uganda and the development of the Turkana County Energy Bill in Kenya, the challenges encountered, especially in the move towards implementation, highlights the importance of strategic planning, robust coordination, and sustained financial commitment.

To move forward, it is essential to address the identified challenges, including the need for comprehensive planning, robust coordination, timely and adequate resource allocation, and bridging existing capacity gaps. This requires strengthening partnerships, enhancing stakeholder engagement processes, securing sustained funding commitments, and leveraging existing policy frameworks. Additionally, addressing non-energy barriers – such as promoting financial inclusion to improve refugees' ability to pay for energy services, easing restrictions on movement, facilitating trade, and expanding access to local employment opportunities – will be critical. By incorporating these recommendations, future initiatives can amplify their impact and sustainability, positioning energy access as a cornerstone of resilience and development in displacement settings.



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